



**DARK
HORSE
COMICS**
ORCHID

2

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ORCHID



TOM MORELLO

SCOTT HEPBURN

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TOM MORELLO

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ORCHID

LETTERS BY
NATE PIEKOS OF **BLAMBOT®**
COVER
MASSIMO CARNEVALE

When the seas rose, genetic codes were smashed. Now, human settlements are ringed by a dense wilderness, from which ferocious new animal species prey on the helpless. The high ground belongs to the rich and powerful, who overlook swamp-land shantytowns from their fortresslike cities. Iron-fisted rule ensures order and allows the wealthy to harvest the poor as slaves. Welcome to the world of *Orchid*.

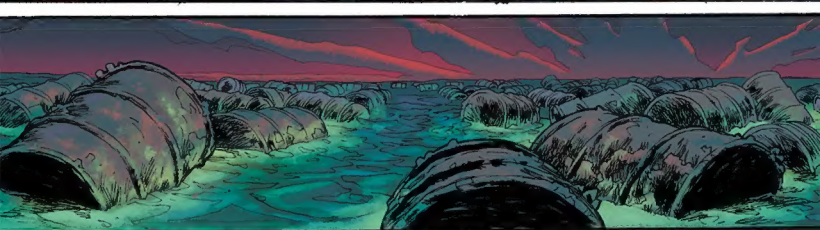
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PUBLISHER **MIKE RICHARDSON** SPECIAL THANKS TO **MICHELE FISHER**

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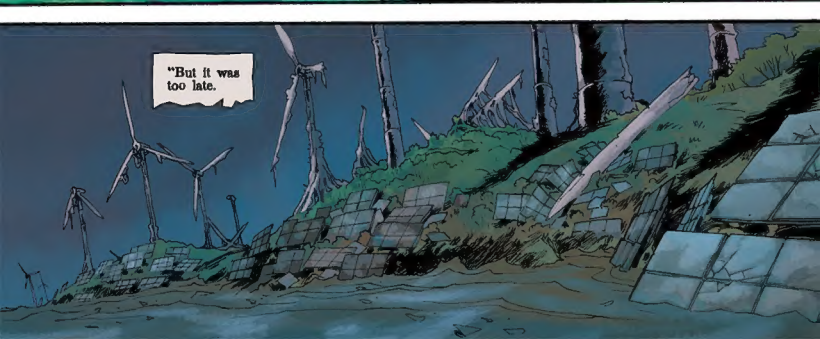
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Printed by Callosus Communications, Easton, PA, U.S.A.

CENTURIES AGO.

"As the waters continued to rise, nations abandoned fossil fuels."



"But it was too late."



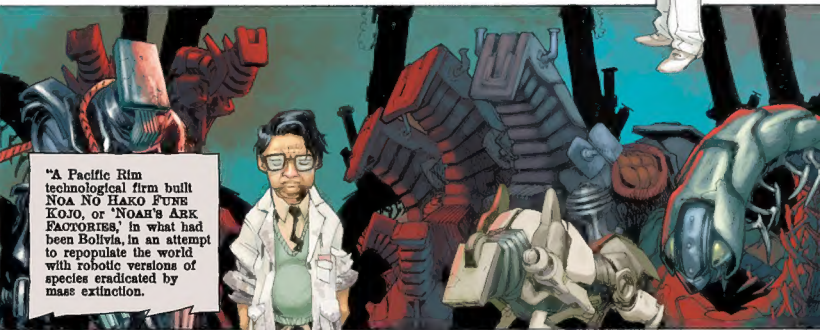




"With the disintegration of nation-states worldwide, scientist warlords—each with multiple corporate sponsors—filled the power vacuum and fought over the ever-shrinking landmass.



"New technologies were developed to fight in the new climate.



"A Pacific Rim technological firm built NOA NO HAKO FUNE KOJO, or 'NOAH'S ARK FACTORIES,' in what had been Bolivia, in an attempt to repopulate the world with robotic versions of species eradicated by mass extinction.



"Meanwhile, a secretive pacifist/terrorist group calling themselves 'THE LAST SAINTS' began a global quest to salvage very specific relics from the deluge.

"But it was all for naught. The rising tide spared no ground.

"All that was left of humanity was set adrift on the Cannibal Barges—huge derelict oil tankers, river barges, and rotting cruise ships...



"...filled with thousands of those savage, cunning, or (un)lucky enough to get onboard.



"...and with little food available they resorted to extreme measures for sustenance.



"As the centuries turned, some remnants of the past—books, artwork, scientific papers, even otherwise-extinct species—survived as trophies for the BARGE MASTERS..."



**PRESENT DAY.
ISCARIOT SLAVE CAMP.**

"...and then, as now,
survival of the cruelest
was the sum of the law."

☹Sob☹
I WANT
MAMA...

HUSH,
YEHZU. MAMA'S
GONE. IT'S JUST
US NOW.

I'LL
PROTECT
YOU, LITTLE
BROTHER.

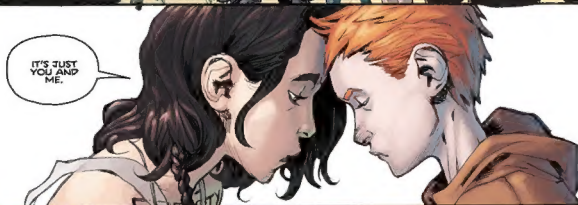
☹Sob☹

I'LL
PROTECT
YOU,
ALWAYS.

AT LEAST
WE NO LONGER
HAVE TO LISTEN
TO THAT...

...CRAZY
MAN.

...AND,
WELL, IT'S
CHEAPER
FOR THEM
TO REPLACE
A DEAD SLAVE
WITH A LIVE
ONE THAN IT
IS FOR THEM
TO IMPROVE
OUR WRETCHED
AND DANGEROUS
CONDITIONS,
YOU SEE?





AND WHAT'S "OLD SAYINGS"?! WHY DO YOU TALK LIKE THAT?! YOU'RE A FOOL AND YOUR WORDS ARE UGLY! **YOU'RE UGLY!**

I ADMIT I WILL NEVER DIE FROM A SURPLUS OF BEAUTY, BUT I WAS A SLAVE ONCE BEFORE, NOT HERE IN THE PITS, BUT IN THE R.S.C. ROBOTICS SLAVE CORPS, YOU SEE?

I GAINED... CERTAIN **ABILITIES** AND HAD ACCESS TO WHAT ARE CALLED... **READING MATERIALS**, "BOOKS," YOU SEE? THEY—

YOU DON'T HAVE THE "ABILITY" TO **STOP TALKING!** NEARLY **EVERY SINGLE WORD** OUT OF YOUR MOUTH SOUNDS STUPID!



WHAT ABOUT THE REST?

Huh? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT ABOUT THE THINGS I SAY THAT DON'T SOUND STUPID?



YOU THINK I'M IGNORANT. YOU'RE TRYING TO TRICK ME.

NO, I—

YOU'RE NOT FOOLING ANYBODY. YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER MAN OUT FOR HIMSELF. **NO ONE** CAN DO ANYTHING BUT **SURVIVE**. AND THAT'S JUST WHAT **WE** ARE GOING TO DO!



WAIT. PLEASE. MY FRIEND ANZIO TAUGHT US... SHOWED ME... WHEN THE SHADOW REBELS...

OKAY, I'M QUITE USELESS IN A FIGHT... BUT WHEN ANZIO STRUCK BACK AT THE SOLDIERS WHEN WE ROBBED THE CARAVANS...

YOU SEE, I WAS CONVINCED TO INFLECT HARM ON THOSE MURDERING BASTARDS... UNTIL WE DID,

DESPITE OUR LOSSES, DESPITE ANZIO'S DEATH, SYMBOLICALLY WE —



SPEAK OF THE
"SHADOW REBEL"
TERRORISTS AGAIN,
BRIDGE SCUM, AND
I'LL "SYMBOLICALLY"
STOMP A HOLE IN
YOUR MISERABLE
FACE!



THE TRAITOR, YOUR
BELOVED "ANZIO,"
HAS AT LAST BEEN
CAPTURED AND WILL
BE EXECUTED ON
FINAL VICTORY
DAY ON THE
NEXT FULL
MOON!



YES, THE LEADER OF THE
SO-CALLED "REBELLION"
WILL DIE IN STADIA
PENUEL ON THE
ANNIVERSARY OF
THE DEATH OF
GENERAL CHINA!
A FITTING END,
NO?



FILTH. ONE DAY
WE'LL ERASE THE
STAIN OF THESE
BRIDGE PEOPLE
PERMANENTLY...



DID YOU
HEAR *THAT*?!
ANZIO IS ALIVE!
ALIVE!



OH, WE MUST
ACT FAST! VERY
GOOD THEN, HERE'S
WHAT WE MUST DO—
OKAY, FIRST, WE
ESCAPE. THEN WE
SOMEHOW MAKE
OUR WAY INTO
FORTRESS PENUEL.
NOT AN EASY
TASK, BUT—



COME,
YEHZU. HE IS
UNWELL.

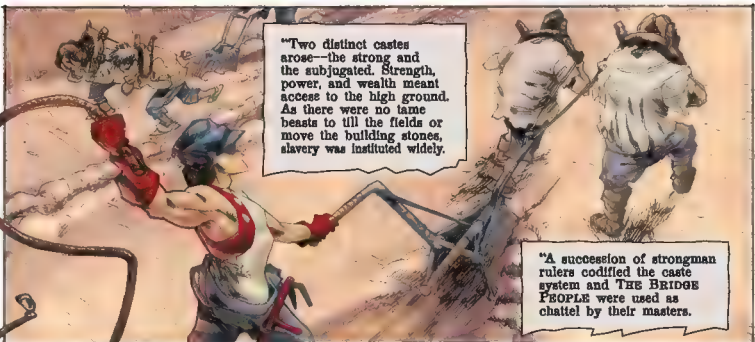
ORCHID,
WHY IS THERE
SO MUCH YELLING,
AND HITTING, AND
SLAVES?

I DON'T
KNOW, YEHZU.
I DON'T KNOW
AND I DON'T KNOW
AND I DON'T CARE. WE'VE
JUST GOT TO
FIND A WAY
OUT OF
HERE.




"When the waters receded,
THE WILD covered all the
land. The newly emerging
species that filled the
evolutionary cracks shared
two characteristics—they
could not be domesticated
and they were extremely
hostile. Humans were no
longer atop the food chain.

"The remnants
of humanity hung
on by a thread.



"Two distinct castes arose—the strong and the subjugated. Strength, power, and wealth meant access to the high ground. As there were no tame beasts to till the fields or move the building stones, slavery was instituted widely.

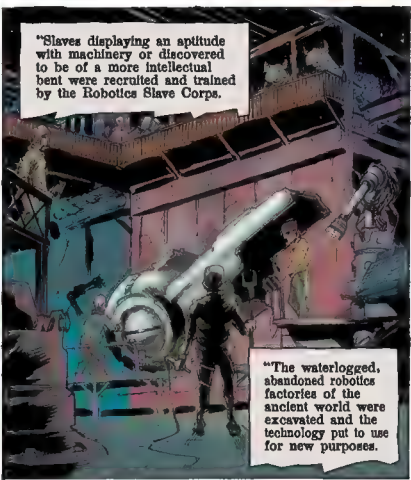
"A succession of strongman rulers codified the caste system and THE BRIDGE PEOPLE were used as chattel by their masters.



"A vast underground labyrinth of tunnels and cavernous 'harvest spaces' was excavated to provide a measure of safety from The Wild.



"REFLEXIVE BIOHEAT PANELS scavenged from the Canutbal Barges brought light and heat to the crops and illuminated the passageways crisscrossing beneath The Wild.

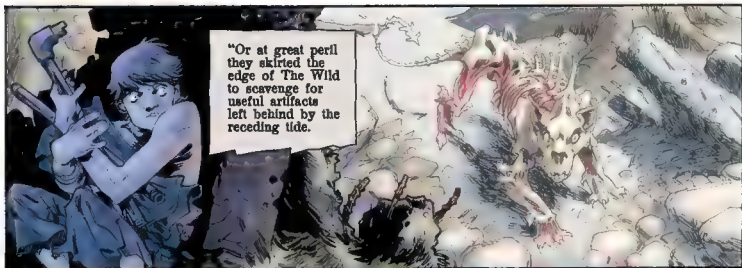


"Slaves displaying an aptitude with machinery or discovered to be of a more intellectual bent were recruited and trained by the Robotics Slave Corps.

"The waterlogged, abandoned robotics factories of the ancient world were excavated and the technology put to use for new purposes.



"The Bridge People scratched out a meager existence harvesting the white leeches sold in the narcotics trade.



"Or at great peril they skirted the edge of The Wild to scavenge for useful artifacts left behind by the receding tide.



"But the Slave Traders were never far behind, always combing The Bridges for new stock. The biggest and brawnliest males brought the highest prices at auction from the Pit Masters of Fortress Pennel.



"The rest awaited their fate in the overcrowded wretchedness of the ISCARIOT SLAVE CAMP."

PRESENT DAY.

ISCARIOT SLAVE CAMP.

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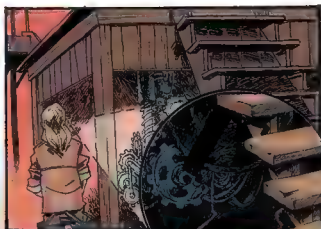


AUCTIONEER,
PERHAPS YOU
DID NOT HEAR
ME. I NEED
HEAVY LIFTERS
FOR THE PITS
OF FORTRESS
PENUEL.

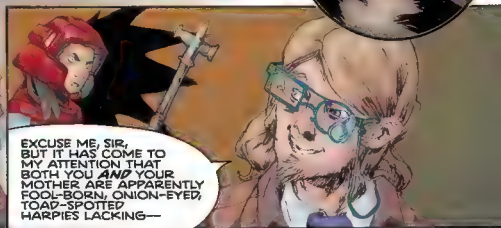
OF
COURSE, PIT
MASTER! I'VE
BEEN SAYING THE
ABSOLUTE BEST
JUST FOR YOU.
HERE THEY COME!
I'M CERTAIN
YOU'LL BE
PLEASED...

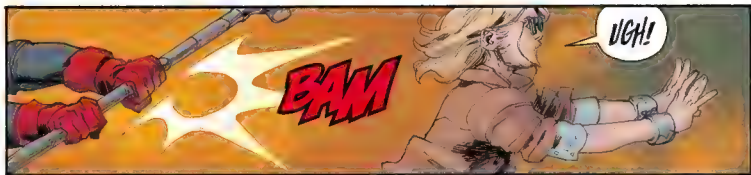


I'VE
GOT TO GET
TO FRUEL
SOMEHOW.



EXCUSE ME, SIR,
BUT IT HAS COME TO
MY ATTENTION THAT
BOTH YOU AND YOUR
MOTHER ARE APPARENTLY
FOOL-BORN, ONION-EYED,
TOAD-SPOTTED
HARPIES LACKING—





BAM

UGH!



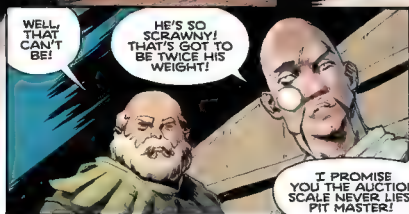
WHOA!



3cought's OKAY. A QUICK LITTLE REWIRING RIGHT HERE SHOULD DO WONDERS...



GET UP, GREENFOOT VERMIN! YOUR TURN TO WEIGH IN!



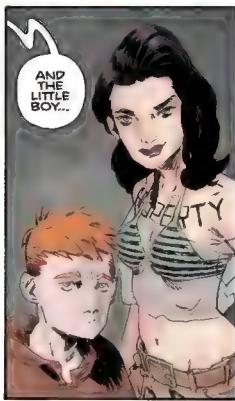
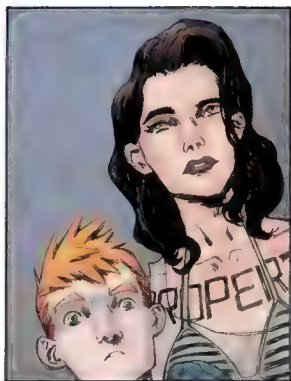
WELL, THAT CAN'T BE!

HE'S SO SCRAWNY! THAT'S GOT TO BE TWICE HIS WEIGHT!

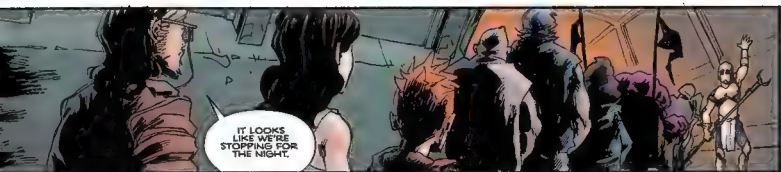
I PROMISE YOU THE AUCTION SCALE NEVER LIES, PIT MASTER!



IT'S NOT THE SCALE I DON'T TRUST, YOU CONNIVING OLD THIEF NEVER MIND, I'LL TAKE THIS WHOLE LOT INCLUDING YOUR MIRACULOUS STRONG-MAN THERE.







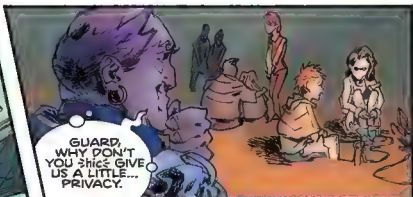
IT LOOKS
LIKE WE'RE
STOPPING FOR
THE NIGHT.



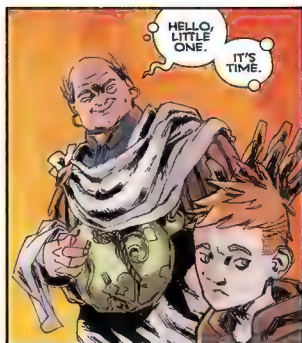
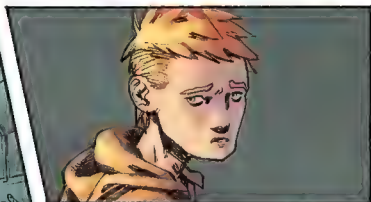
WE'RE
DEEP UNDER
THE WILD
TOWNIGHT. YOU
CAN ALMOST
FEEL IT
ABOVE US.

ORCHID,
I'M
SCARED.

Shhh.
THERE'S
NOTHING TO
BE AFRAID
OF. WE'RE
SAFE DOWN
HERE.



GUARD,
WHY DON'T
YOU SHIES GIVE
US A LITTLE...
PRIVACY.



HELLO,
LITTLE
ONE.

IT'S
TIME.



Ohhh,
I HAVE BEEN
WAITING FOR
YOU, HANDSOME!
WHY DID YOU
TAKE SO LONG
TO FIND ME?

NO!
SHURPS
THE BOY
FIRST...



LOOK HERE!
LOOK... THIS IS THE
MASK WORN BY GENERAL
CHINA, THE **REAL** MASK, I
SWEAR IT ON MY LIFE, IT HAS
TREMENDOUS POWERS, TOMO
WOLFE HIMSELF IS DESPERATELY
SEEKING ITS RETURN AND...
I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU.

I'LL
GIVE IT TO
YOU IF YOU
LEAVE THEM
ALONE.



Hah! RID-~~shic~~-ULOUS.
STRONG MAN, YOU ~~shic~~
ANNOY ME, I WILL GET
WHAT I PAID FOR ~~shic~~
AND DISPOSE OF THESE
TWO TONIGHT. THEY
ARE OF NO USE TO ME
IN THE PITS, BEGONE,
OR I'LL DISPOSE OF
YOU ~~shic~~ AS
WELL!



TAKE IT. TAKE
THE MASK NOW
AND PUT IT
ON.



Mmmmm. NEVER MIND
HIM. COME ON,
HANDSOME. I'VE HAD
TRICKS FROM GATH
THAT WERE MORE OF
A MAN THAN YOU.
~~Shhee~~ JUST KIDDING,
MY LOVE. HERE, I'LL
TAKE THE MASK IF YOU
DON'T THINK YOU
CAN HANDLE--



Bah!
FOOLISHNESS.
VALKS AND
THEIR TWISTED
TASTES... YOU'LL
SEE WHO...





OHH!!

WHAT WAS THAT?!

THE MASK KILLS ANYONE WHO PUTS IT ON. CAUSES THE WEARER TO *IMplode*. IT WOULD SEEM, VERY GRUESOME.



AND *THAT* IS OUR CUE TO EXPEDITE OUR DEPARTURE FROM BONPAGE! *RUN!*



BUT THERE'S NOWHERE TO RUN. THEY'LL KILL US!

I'M SORRY TO SAY THAT DOES SEEM LIKELY, YOUNG MAN.



YEHZU! CLIMB!!

WE *CAN'T* GO UP THERE! THAT LEADS TO THE WILD! WE *HAVE* TO GET TO FORTRESS PENUEL!

THEN STAY BEHIND! HURRY, YEHZU!



UP THERE! GET 'EM!

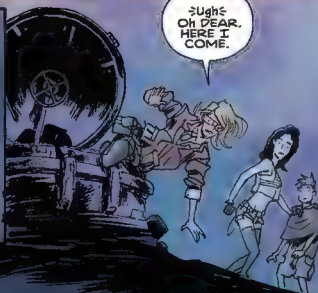


Shuff! I'M NOT SURE THIS Shuff! IS A GOOD...

JUST SHUFF! SHUT UP!



FASTER, YEHZU! THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US!



Shuff! Oh DEAR. HERE I COME.



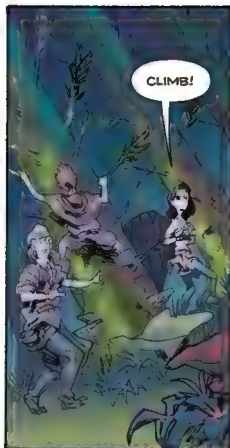
BWARRRRR



Uh-oh.

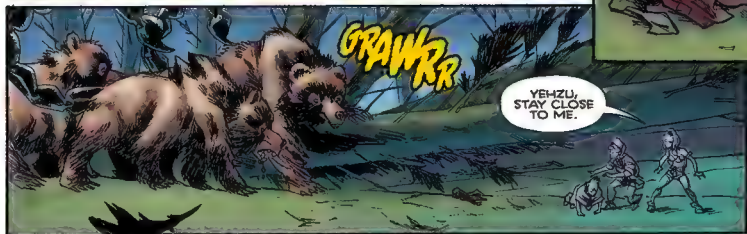
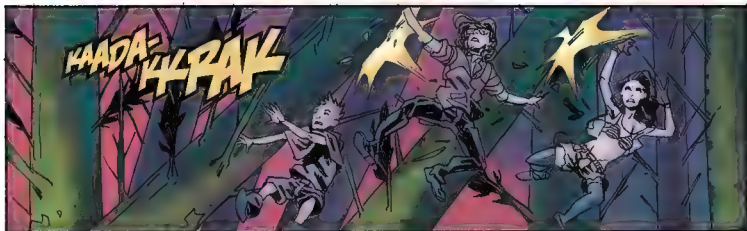
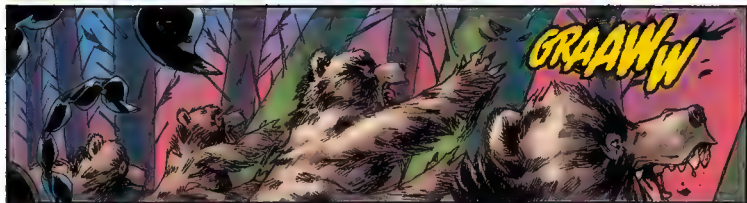


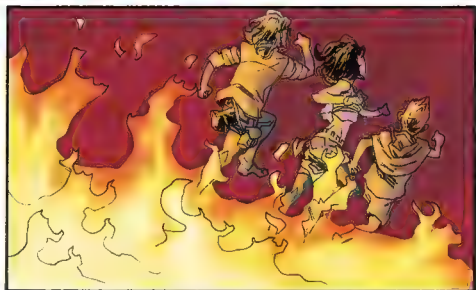
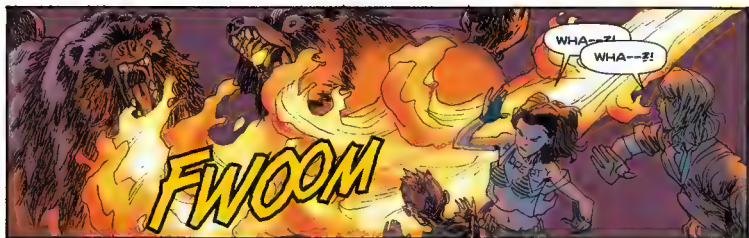
CLIMB!

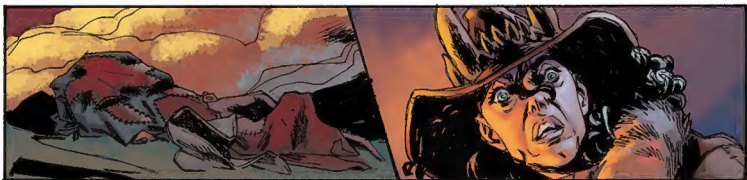
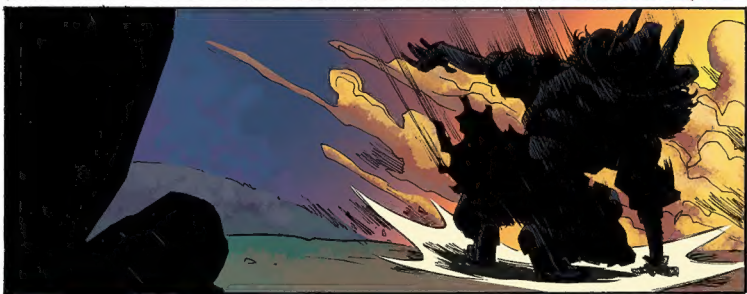


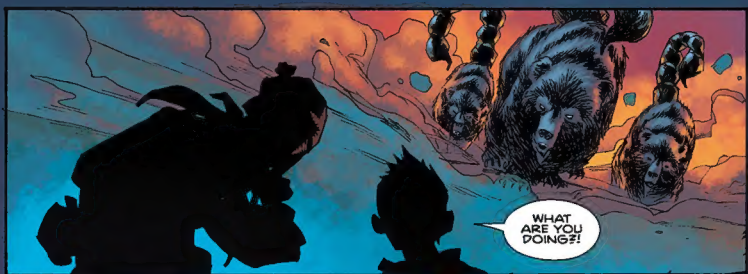
SKRAK











THE SHADOW REBEL READER

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C/O DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OR 97222

In September we made a request on the Dark Horse blog for Tom Morello and Scott Hepburn fans to write in asking questions or commenting on *Orchid*. We received a few letters from folks who haven't yet read the series and hope that next month we can treat readers to more letters from those of you now reading the comics and, hopefully, listening to the free *Orchid*-inspired music on NightwatchmanMusic.com. We want to know what you think of *Orchid* and this ragtag crew of Simon, Orchid, and Yehzu thus far, and answer any burning questions or address any of your hopes and fears for the characters. I can't wait to hear about readers' first impressions. Until then . . .

I was born and raised in Madison, WI, and I rallied alongside one hundred thousand others for the sake of the unions. We are still struggling to fight this battle, and we need a voice like Morello's to help keep us strong in our solidarity. When we find that the system is corrupt, the only way to beat it is through art. Tom Morello and Scott Hepburn are doing just

that, helping to create a voice for those struggling to fight injustice. Thank you for everything you've done, and keep up the good fight.

Sincerely,
Sunshine, Dan Schneeberg

Can't wait to read your comic, Tom. Had it ordered since I heard about it. You're right in that class is rarely a feature of mainstream comics. Looking forward to some positive comments on it!

Linsay

Thanks for chiming in. I'm proud of this series and eager to take you all on a ride deep into the fantastic world of Tom, Scott, and Orchid.



Sierra Hahn, editor

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